

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ITALIAN MEDIA REACTION TO U.S. ARMS TO ISRAEL

1. ITALIAN MEDIA TODAY CONSIDERED US ANNOUNCEMENT IT WAS SUPPLYING ISRAEL WITH REPLACEMENT ARMS A "DANGEROUS ESCALATION" OF THE MID-EAST WAR BUT VIRTUALLY ALL NEWSPAPERS AND RADIO/TV BALANCED IT WITH THE REPORT OF "MASSIVE" SOVIET AIRLIFT TO THE ARABS. THUS, A TYPICAL HEADLINE (IL TEMPO OF ROME) WAS "DANGEROUS INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT."
2. LEAD STORIES ALMOST ALL DEALT WITH LAST NIGHT'S STATE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCEMENT WHICH WAS GENERALLY PLACED FIRMLY IN CONTEXT IN WHICH IT MADE, THAT IS AS RESPONSE TO SOVIETS. EVEN COMMUNIST /PAESE SERA/ SET ITS HEADLINE "U.S.- ISRAEL AIR BRIDGE" AGAINST SUB-HEAD OF "FULL RUSSIAN SUPPORT TO THE ARABS." AND ON AN INSIDE PAGE, THE SAME PAPER RAN STORIES ON SOVIET AND U.S. AID TO THE COMBATANTS ONE BESIDE THE OTHER IN BALANCED LAYOUT.
3. NATIONWIDE RAI/TV PRESENTED FULL AND FAIR BACKGROUND U.S. DECISION SUPPLY ARMS TO ISRAEL. NY CORRESPONDENT GAWRONSKI REPORTED ON INFORMATION RECEIVED IN U.S. OF FURTHER INCREASES IN SOVIET AIRLIFT, SUPPORTING REPORT WITH STATISTICS ON NUMBER AND TYPE OF ARMAMENTS BEING SHIPPED. HE QUOTED DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN MCCLOSKEY TO EFFECT THAT U.S. ACTION WAS EFFORT TO PREVENT THE MASSIVE SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENTS "FROM ALTERING THE STRATEGIC AND MILITARY BALANCE" IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND QUOTED PRESIDENT

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NIXON ON U.S. EFFORTS "TO END FIGHTING IN WAY THAT MAY ALLOW THE

BUILDING OF A LASTING PEACE." GAWRONSKI NOTED AT SAME TIME THAT WITH UN SEEMINGLY PARALYZED, "WE ARE ON EDGE OF AN INVOLVEMENT BY THE TWO SUPERPOWERS."

4. MOST PAPERS FEATURED PRESIDENT'S REMARKS AT WHITE HOUSE MEDAL OF HONOR CEREMONIES. THESE WERE WIDELY INTERPRETED TO MEAN U.S. WAS PREPARED SEND TROOPS INTO MIDDLE EAST AS IT HAD IN LEBANON IN 1958. THIS INTERPRETATION MET WITH GENERAL DISAPPROVAL IN MOST NEWSPAPERS. ONLY CONSERVATIVE NEWSPAPER /LA NAZIONE/ (OF FLORENCE) CAME OUT STRONGLY IN FAVOR SUCH A U.S. MOVE IN FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL BY ITS EDITOR IN CHIEF BARTOLI. HE COMPARED PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE TO WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS TRADITIONAL U.S. FEELING "WHICH LED THE GREAT COUNTRY TO INTERVENE SO MANY TIMES IN DEFENSE OF THREATENED FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE OF AR-A-WAY PEOPLES."

5. MOST MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD PAPERS WERE CLEARLY WORRIED AND SKEPTICAL ABOUT WHAT EFFECT THE U.S. SUPPLY ACTION WOULD HAVE ON CHANCES FOR PEACE. L. MANISCO IN /IL MESSAGGERO/ (OF ROME), OFTEN CRITICAL OF U.S. POLICIES, SAW CONTINUED HOPE FOR AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE AN "IN LOCO" TRUCE, BUT WONDERED HOW SEVERELY ANNOUNCEMENT OF U.S. MOVE WOULD HINDER THESE EFFORTS. BUT EVEN /MESSAGGERO/ BALANCED ITS HEADLINES ANNOUNCING "AMERICAN AIR BRIDGE FOR ISRAEL" WITH SUB-HEAD READING: "MEANWHILE KISSINGER'S DIPLOMATIC ACTION DEVELOPS FARTHR."

6. A FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL IN /IL TEMPO/ WAS ALSO SOMEWHAT DOUBTFUL ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF AMERICAN ARMS SHIPMENTS: "IT IS LOGICAL TO ASK HOW TO RECONCILE THE ANNOUNCEMENT...WITH THE NEW PEACE INITIATIVE, BASED ON THE PROPOSAL FOR A TRUCE IN PLACE..." EDITORIAL EXAMINES ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST CHANCES THAT THIS TWO-PRONGED APPROACH WILL SUCCEED, AND CONCLUDES THAT AT LEAST IT HAS MADE CLEAR THE GREAT COST THE SOVIET UNION AND ARAB STATES WILL HAVE TO BEAR IF THEY WISH "TO CONTINUE FUELING THE CONFLICT."VOLPE

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